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Respectfully submitted

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by

Nathan S. Engle.

Homœopathic Medical College

of Pennsylvania

On the 28th day of Feby one thousand

Eight hundred and forty nine

For the

Degree of Doctor of Homœopathic Medicine

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The period of puberty in the female is announced by the enlargement of the mamma, by the growth of hair upon the pubis, by the developement of the pelvis, and by the appearance of the menstrual or catamenial discharge. Her complexion is now improved, her countenance is more expressive and animated, her attitudes graceful, and her conversation more intelligent and agreeable; the tone of her voice becomes more harmonious, her whole frame is expanded and enlarged, and her mind is no longer engaged in childish pursuits and amusements.

The menstrual process is physiological in its character, and consists in a sanguineous discharge from the Uterine system, beginning at puberty and renewing itself from time to time during the procreative period, unless interrupted either by disease, gestation or lactation. The function of menstruation is common to every race of man. The appearance of this discharge may be regarded as indicative of a full development of the organs of generation; but, on the other hand, the non-appearance of the catamenia does not imply an inability on the part of the female to procreate the species, unless it be accompanied with an undeveloped condition of the ovaries, of the pelvis of the mamma, &c.

It is well known, that if the ovaries be congenitally defective, none of the signs of puberty to which I have alluded, will make their appearance and farther, if they be removed, not only will the catamenial discharge cease but there will be no return at regular periods of the ordinary symptoms of a monthly flow. When, on the contrary the ovaries are healthy and well developed though the Uterus be defective, there will occur, at each successive monthly period, symptoms of the menstrual erythism, without the discharge. Menstruation must be regarded as a phenomenon consequent upon or secondary to the full developement of the generative system, and closely connected with the periodic

discharge of ova. In this view of the matter, the absence of the menses does not imply sterility provided the other signs of puberty exist, whereas their presence is an external evidence of the fitness of the generative organs for the exercise of their important functions

"The catamenia often make their appearance without any premonitory symptoms; they are however preceded most usually by colicky pains, a sense of weight and heat about the pelvis headache, full pulse, &c. The discharge at first is small in quantity and of a muco-serolent character, soon becoming abundant and bloody. After a few days the flow begins to decline, becoming less in quantity,

and of a paler hue, until it finally ceases. When the catamenial flow has been fully established, all the premonitory symptoms disappear, to be followed by others indicative of great lassitude and debility, which in their turn give place to the establishment of the ordinary health of the individual, as soon as the discharge has ceased.

The period of life at which the catamenia first make their appearance is not the same in all countries. In England and Scotland the greatest number of females begin to menstruate at 15 years of age while some few menstruate as early as the 11th and others as late as the 19th year.

the catamenia. 6th The ordinary time of duration of a single catamenial period is about five days; this is modified, however, by many circumstances, as peculiarities of Constitution, the health of the individual, moral Emotions, Cold, &c.

7th The quantity of blood discharged at each menstrual period varies very much with different persons; though, in an individual of good health, the quantity lost is nearly the same at all times.

Hippocrates fixed the amount lost by the females in Greece at eighteen ounces; this is more than double the amount lost by females in more temperate climates.

In our country the amount lost at each menstruation is from four to six ounces.

Women who begin to menstruate very early, are said to lose less, than those with whom the function commences at its usual period. High temperature, luxurious and exciting modes of life, induce a greater loss of menstrual blood, than where the opposite condition of things exist.

When the catamenia are once established, they recur in most cases every twenty-eight days, unless interrupted by disease, lactation or gestation. Some females naturally menstruate less frequently and less regularly

than others, and in some cases the function continues during lactation and gestation.

The function of menstruation usually ceases between the Forty-fifth and fiftieth year, so that the procreative period of a female, which is the period during which she menstruates, continues during thirty years. In some cases the function ceases early in life, or it may be continued to a very advanced age.

The menstrual fluid resembles pure blood, but contains less fibrine, and will not, under ordinary circumstances, coagulate.

The menstrual fluid proceeds from the Uterus, which has been proved 1st by dissections of the Uterus of females dying during the menstrual period, the interior of that organ is found covered over with bloody spots, and the blood could be pressed out of its walls.
2nd In prolapsus uteri, the fluid is seen running from the mouth of the Uterus. 3rd If the Uterus be examined with the speculum, during the catamenial period, the blood is seen trickling through the os uteri. 4th As the Uterine cavity is occupied by the product of conception, menstruation ceases. In some few cases the catamenia continue during pregnancy

The only explanation I can give of this is that the discharge proceeds from the unexpanded portion of the cervix Uteri; or it may be that the Vagina takes on a supplemental action, similar in character to the vicarious discharges, sometimes met with.

The cause of this periodical discharge is involved in great doubt. Lunar influence has been thought to be the cause, but facts do not warrent such a notion.

Local or general plethora has been referred to.

That the uterus, during the catamenial flow, is congested, is a fact which no one doubts, but why this

congestion should occur every 28th day is a point utterly inexplicable, even at the present day.

The only explanation I can give of the function of menstruation is that the Uterine system becomes, at stated periods the seat of a certain aphrodisiac excitement, and in consequence of this excitement, or irritation, a congestion of the Uterus, &c., takes place; which, after a longer or shorter interval, is relieved by the free exhalation of blood from the interior of the Uterus, constituting the menstrual or catamenial flow